

**Soldiers** **Online**



# Spotlight on the Army Divisions



**Wearing protective gear, a soldier of the 1st Infantry Division's 2nd Brigade moves toward his next objective during training.**

**Division air defense soldiers slingload an Avenger vehicle during a Stinger live-fire at Germany's Putlos training facility.**

# The Big Red One

Story by MAJ John M. Clearwater



MAJ John M. Clearwater (main photo)

SPC Melissa R. Bernazzani (inset)

**A**NYONE who has seen the assault on Omaha Beach, as depicted in the opening scene of the film “Saving Private Ryan,” will appreciate the 1st Infantry Division’s legacy of fortitude and determination in the face of the toughest opposition. Now, as the Army enters the 21st century, the famed “Big Red One” continues to build upon that legacy as a lethal, battle-tested powerhouse in America’s military arsenal.

Throughout its 83 years the division has made a big difference on battlefields around the world. The Army’s first combat division was formed for the trench warfare of World War I, and it quickly earned the appreciation of French citizens who referred to it as “The Fighting First.” While today’s 1st Inf. Div. maintains its reputation as one of the world’s premiere heavy combat units, it maintains the flexibility to be a full-spectrum force, from high-intensity combat to peace-support operations.

The division was one of the first American units to enter Kosovo, and for more than a year the blood-red “1” on the division’s patch was a symbol of security in the country. Big Red One soldiers were the core of the Army’s peacekeeping force from June 1999 to June 2000, daily demonstrating their ability to be persuasive in peace.



MAJ John Clearwater is the 1st Inf. Div. deputy public affairs officer.





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**M109A6 Paladin self-propelled howitzers of the division's 1st Battalion, 7th Field Artillery, practice their craft at Grafenwöhr Training Area.**

"Peacekeeping was not what I imagined doing when I joined the Army," said one sergeant. "But seeing the look on the faces of those people, it made me feel good about being a soldier. We made a big difference in their lives."

When the division discovered five guerrilla camps operating near the Serbian border, it launched surprise raids that netted thousands of rounds of ammunition and weapons, including mines, grenades and mortars. The success of the raids — executed with surprise, speed and teamwork — clearly demonstrated the capabilities and responsiveness of Big Red One combat teams.

Upon returning home to Germany, the division's soldiers began sharpening their fighting skills through accelerated gunnery and training focused on high-intensity combat. Throughout its ranks, soldiers are committed to ensuring that the division remains a key element of U.S. global leadership in the European Theater.

Strategic readiness was, in fact, the reason the majority of the division was forward-deployed to Germany in 1996. While its 1st Brigade remained stationed at Fort Riley, Kan., the rest

SGT Annette B. Andrews



**During the partnership exercise Elbe Stoer soldiers of the 1st ID's 3rd Bde. demonstrated their land-navigation skills to their German counterparts.**

of its brigades and support elements were re-established across southern Germany, where the division is stationed in six communities throughout Bavaria. From this strategic position, the 1st Inf. Div. can bring the weight of its combat power to bear throughout the theater within days of a deployment order.

## **Infantry Muscle**

The history of warfare shows that there has always been a critical need for skilled infantry. For that reason, the division was designed from the start to

SSG Chris Fletcher

be the Army's infantry muscle. With its heavier firepower and armor, today's heavy infantry has the punch and endurance to seize and hold terrain in the face of the most determined opposition.

Big Red One infantrymen are backed by the devastating firepower of its primary combat platform, the highly mobile Bradley fighting vehicle. With Operation Desert Storm upgrades, making for faster reload times and better infantry support, the M2 has been performance-enhanced by a 600 hp engine and the power of an armored turret mounting a 25 mm M-242 "Bushmaster" chain gun and a twin TOW antitank missile launcher. The M2's three-man crew can quickly move six soldiers across the battlefield and support them in a fight.

Other key elements of the division's punch include the M1 Abrams tank, the AH-64 Apache attack helicopter, the M109 Paladin 155 mm self-propelled howitzer and the Multiple Launch Rocket System. When these weapons are teamed together and synchronized, the result is overwhelming firepower able to demoralize and overcome virtually any opponent.

"Big Red One infantry then close in and exploit that enemy disorder," said former 1st Inf. Div. commander MG David L. Grange (Ret.). "It is classic bare-knuckles combat combined with 21st century punching power."

## **Big Red One Teamwork**

Recognizing the importance of individual infantry skills, military professionals also know that success on the battlefield depends on the contributions of the whole team. From Army aviators to artillerymen, maintenance personnel, cooks, staff planners and every other member of the divi-

sion, the success of the Big Red One is the result of the combined talents of each of its more than 14,000 soldiers.

Having fine-tuned combat teamwork throughout the command, the division has expanded the concept to joint operations with nations throughout the European theater. It now conducts regular partnership training with many countries of the former Soviet Bloc, including Hungary, Bulgaria and Ukraine.

In a recent field exercise at the Combat Maneuver Training Center in Hohenfels, Germany, Big Red One armor and aviation units teamed with German panzergrenadiers and British paratroopers to take on the resident opposing force. The weeklong “battle,” which included night tank attacks and air-assault missions behind “enemy” lines, succeeded in keeping the OPFOR off balance. By the end of the exercise, the soldiers had clearly demonstrated their ability to come together quickly as a multinational team and win a tough fight.

This “crew-to-coalition” teamwork has long been recognized as crucial to success. In Kosovo, that perspective paid off as the Big Red One operated

closely alongside NATO forces and soldiers from Russia and the United Arab Emirates.

### Prepositioned for the 21st Century

The 1st Inf. Div. also has a leading role in the Army’s heavy-division redesign for the 21st century and was the first frontline division to begin the initiative known as Limited Conver-

sion Division XXI. The end-state was an even more agile and flexible combat team.

While the overall size of the division was reduced, the additions of a brigade reconnaissance troop to each brigade, creation of a new MLRS battalion for long-range fires (doubling to 18 the number of launchers) and the addition of another infantry squad to each platoon provided significant



MSG Larry Lane

**Black Hawk helicopters of the V Corps long range surveillance train bring personnel in to deal with a simulated hostage situation.**



SPC Melissa R. Bernazzani

**A live Stinger missile roars aloft as a dismounted division air defense team engages a target.**



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benefits. For example, more dismounted infantry improves combat effectiveness in restrictive areas such as forests and urban terrain. While the division continues to field the world's most lethal heavy-infantry teams, now it has even greater strategic responsiveness. Developing technologies will soon provide integrated battle command toward further enhancing agility and lethality.

## Legacy of Warrior Spirit

Even while looking to the future, division soldiers derive great pride from a legacy that encompasses most of the 20th century. Over the past 83 years more than a half-million Americans have worn the Big Red One patch. America has counted on them to accomplish some of its toughest challenges, resulting in the division earning 33 battle streamers and 34 Medals of Honor, and being recognized for fighting and winning more battles than any other division in the world.

SPC Melissa R. Bernazzani



**Escorted by local youngsters, soldiers of the 1st ID's 1st Bn., 26th Inf., patrol a village in Kosovo to ensure peace between Kosovars and Serbs.**

That legacy of sacrifice continues to be honored on battlefield monuments across Europe, from Omaha Beach to the Czech Republic. One of the most inspiring tributes stands

beside the White House in Washington where, carved in granite, are the names of all division soldiers who have given their lives for the nation.

Before the 1st Inf. Div. embarked

## The Division in History

**A**MERICA's first Regular Army division was constituted May 24th, 1918, as the First Expeditionary Division and shipped to France shortly after America entered World War I. Redesignated the First Division that July, it was the first American division to conduct combat operations, to inflict and suffer casualties, and to conduct a successful offensive.

The division's success at Cantigny, France, on May 28, proved to all that the Americans could fight, and ensured that GEN John J. Pershing would keep the American Army from being absorbed into the Allied forces.

After that success, the division shattered the German line at Soissons in what historian Corelli Barnett considered to be the decisive point of the war on the Western



**Big Red One soldiers move through the ruins of Bonn, Germany, during the World War II battle for the city. The division saw action throughout the conflict.**

Front. The division also led the way for American forces in the St. Mihiel and Meuse-Argonne offensives, making the furthest penetrations of any division. During this time, it adopted the distinctive shoulder patch known as the "Big Red One." At the end of

MSG Larry Lane



**Before deploying to the Balkans troops of the 1st ID and other USAREUR units undergo training at the Combat Maneuver Training Center in Hohenfels, Germany.**

for its third combat landing in World War II, and the beach that would soon be known as “Bloody Omaha,” Supreme Allied Commander GEN Dwight D. Eisenhower told the division’s soldiers: “I know your record from the day you landed in Africa, then Sicily. I am beginning to think that the 1st Div. is a sort of Praetorian Guard.”

That warrior spirit, built upon courage and uncompromising standards, resonates in the division motto: “No mission too difficult. No sacrifice too great. Duty First!”

As former division commander and Army chief of staff GEN Gordon R. Sullivan once declared: “In this century, there has been no military unit more symbolic of American military power than the 1st Inf. Div. It embodies past and future victory.” □

MAJ John M. Clearwater



**Soldiers from Co. A, 1st Bn., 18th Inf., demonstrate small-unit tactics at the MOUT site during a division-wide leaders professional development class.**

the war, Pershing praised the division as his best, noting a “special pride of service and high state of morale never broken by hardship or battle.”

Tasked to occupy Germany immediately after the Armistice, the division was again called to action in World War II.

Redesignated the 1st Infantry Division, the Big Red One conducted the first American amphibious assault on enemy territory, captured the port of Oran, Algeria, and led the American effort in the defeat of Rommel’s Afrika Korps.

In 1943 the division successfully assaulted Sicily and then was chosen to lead the American assault on the beaches of Normandy, France. After a successful drive across France and Germany, the division advanced on Cheb, Czechoslovakia, as the war in Europe ended.

Once again on occupation duty, the division defended a new Germany from communist threat through the next four and a half decades that culminated in German reunification in

1989-1990. And twice during the decades following World War II the division was called upon to fight the nation’s wars — in the jungles of Vietnam and the sands of Iraq.

During operations in Vietnam, from 1965 to 1970, the division had an outstanding reputation, earning 11 more battle streamers.

In 1990 and 1991 the division continued that legacy when it spearheaded the attack to defeat Iraqi

forces, creating the hole through which VII Corps could launch its attack and securing the last objective of the brief but violent war.

Upon the return of division headquarters to Germany, 1st Inf. Div. conducted operations in the former Yugoslavia. Then, after successful operations in Bosnia, the division led the American effort to restore peace in Kosovo. — MAJ Steve Russell, S-3, 1st Bn., 26th Inf.



**A machine-gun crew provides covering fire for advancing 1st ID units during the battle for Aachen, the first German city to fall to Allied forces in World War II.**